A
CRITICAL ESSAY

ON

SIR A. SESHIA SASTRI, K.C.S.I.,

BY

C. KARUNAKARA MENON.

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SIR A. SESHIA SASTRI, K.C.S.I.*

WE have read this book with interest. It is a goodly sized volume, is exceedingly well written and well arranged, and contains all the information that could fittingly be placed before the public of a life which has interesting lessons to impart, lessons of industry, of perseverance, of devotion to duty, of honesty and resoluteness of purpose, and of an unblemished and successful public career. It is the first biographical sketch of an Indian, written by an Indian, on this side of India, and must surely interest every Indian reader as it has interested us. The subject of the sketch belongs to a generation which was the first to benefit by Western education and culture. He was one of the small batch of brilliant young men who received their education in the Old High School as the favourite pupils of Mr. Eyre Burton Powell, and who subsequently passed out as Proficients to distinguish themselves in the work of administration and statecraft, to be patted by high English officials and patronised by Maharajahs. The British Indian administration, as then constituted, urgently needed the services of young men such as Mr. Powell turned out in small and select numbers. A high value was, therefore, set on the products of the High School. High English officials wanted young men of the new stamp. But their supply was disproportionate to the demand. Few men who seek worldly success and prosperity could have been more favourably situated than were Seshia Sastri and his contempora-

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*A biographical sketch by B. V. Kameswara Aiyar, M.A., Pudukota. Srinivasa Varadachari & Co., Madras.

ries. Their scholarly attainments could not have been superior to those of hundreds of young men who in these days annually pass out of our colleges and are quietly absorbed into the public service or the learned professions, whom none notices and whom none is anxious to encourage. But the smallness of their number made them conspicuous among their contemporaries and objects of exceptional regard to employers of educated talent. A young man of ordinary intelligence and common sense, assisted by uniform industry, could have in those days passed successfully out of the High School, and commanded the respect and admiration of men around him, and ensured a successful career in the public service. The intelligent appreciation of his official superiors and the blind admiration of the multitude alike elevated him above the common level. But the young men, of whom Seshia Sastri was perhaps the smartest, were endowed with more than ordinary intelligence; and they were assisted in cultivating it by teachers who moved with them closely and intimately, and directed their studies with parental and friendly concern. This is an advantage denied to young men of these days whose association with their teachers is more or less of a formal nature and is confined to the class room.

At the time Seshia Sastri began his education and his career in the public service there was nothing higher to aspire for than a clerkship to start with and a Deputy Collectorship as the consummation of life. The thoughts of young men were, therefore, naturally turned to securing the attention and patronage of high officials. The young men with whom Seshia studied were all of one mind in this respect. Their thoughts and aspirations were moulded alike, and they were all trained in the same manner. There was then no public life in which they could distinguish themselves. There were no parliamentary laurels awaiting them. They had no ambition to shine as scholars or writers. They could not think of shining as warriors or heroes. They all had one common aim, and that was to pass out of their school with the Proficient's test, with a good knowledge of English, with a capacity for obedience and an aptitude for hard work. All these they acquired under the sympathetic tuition of Mr. Powell. But office and patronage were in other hands. High officials in those days moved in a higher plane. They were not easily accessible to young men like Seshia Sastri. They had to be approached with obsequiousness, and served with humility

and devotion. But the passport of the Proficient's test, backed up by the influence of Mr. Powell, led them to the notice of great men; and their own ability, industry and devotion ensured their success in after life. Seshia Sastri, it is recorded, had to wait at the gate of a high English official for days together in order to attract his notice. Many a young man in these days would deem it an indignity to thus wait at the gate and to be left repeatedly unnoticed. The pride of birth, the pride of education, the pride of self-importance would have revolted against a means so humiliating and so inconsistent with self-respect. But Seshia went through the process with no apparent consciousness of any harm to independence or self-respect. He probably consoled himself that it was a necessary preliminary for his future greatness and distinction.

Seshia was born of parents in very humble circumstances. He belonged to a family of priests which had never had any connection with the work of government or administration. It had produced men of learning, but never soldiers, statesmen or administrators. His great grandfather had enjoyed more than a local celebrity as a Vedic scholar, and had been treated with honour at the court of the Peshwas. But the succeeding generations seem to have fallen even in learning; and Seshia's father was no better than many other ordinary Brahmans who performed priestly duties without any clear idea of their significance. Poverty was in the family, but it was relieved by the earnings of the father who officiated at domestic ceremonies in the neighbouring Brahman households. The father had six sons, and Seshia was the fifth. Although there is a preference in Hindu families for male children, a succession of sons had made Seshia's mother desirous for a daughter, and when accordingly a son was born for the fifth time, the mother felt disappointed. But the midwife was of a different opinion; she declared that the fifth son would bring the greatest luck to the family. The random prophecy was destined to be fulfilled, and in after life the ignorant midwife claimed full credit for it. Seshia was invested with the sacred thread in his eighth year, and obtained the status of the twice-born. This was the turning point in his life. He might have been, like his father and grandfather, dedicated to priestly life. The traditions of the family were decidedly in favour of such a course. But Seshia had an uncle living in Madras engaged as a dealer in precious stones. This man was earning a

decent living, and could afford to support his nephew in an English school. The boy accordingly set out on his journey to Madras with great pride and high hopes of his future. His first tutor in Madras was a certain Mudali who gave him lessons in Tamil. He was then placed in an English School where he had for his teacher a Portuguese named Rodrigues. About this time (1837) the Reverend John Anderson, a Scottish Missionary, established the General Assembly's school to which Seshia with the rest of Rodrigues's pupils went over in a body. Here he remained for three years and picked up a respectable knowledge in the several branches of study pursued there. The conversion to Christianity of some high caste Hindu boys studying in the school created alarm among the Hindu public, and was the prelude for the withdrawal of all Hindu boys. Seshia was among those who thus withdrew from the institution, and his next and final course was in the celebrated institution which is remembered to this day as the High School of Madras, a name which is so intimately associated with the Presidency College that even jatka-wallahs know no other name for the model Government institution than the humble one which the old institution bore. It was here that Seshia was joined by his illustrious contemporaries, whose names are glorified by their success in school and achievements in after life. Here Mr. Powell stood to them all in the position of a parent and teacher. His interest in his pupils was unique. He instructed them in and out of school hours. He regulated their conduct and morals with industrious devotion. In his own house they were treated like his children. They rejoiced when a son was born to him; and they joined in celebrating the first birthday of the babe.

Among the boys who sat at the feet of Mr. Powell were, besides Seshia Sastri, Rama Iyengar and Madhava Row. The last had the advantages of wealth and high connections; his father and grandfather had been Dewans of Travancore; and in personal appearance and accomplishments he was decidedly superior to any of his class-mates. Moderation, tact and sound commonsense characterised Madhava Row even in his very early days. By his brilliancy and personal charms he soon attracted the attention and sympathy of those above him. But Seshia Sastri does not appear to have possessed many of these advantages. He was, beyond doubt, poor, and his uncle, upon whom he depended, could hardly find means to support him in

school. The only thing that distinguished him among his class-mates was his smartness, his readiness of wit and repartee. As a conversationalist Seshia enjoys a unique distinction among educated Indians, and this accomplishment he seems to have possessed to a degree even in his School days. Smartness and youth are bound to have sympathisers and admirers, and Seshia certainly commanded the sympathy both of his master and of his associates. When, therefore, Mr. Powell found that the boy had no means to regularly pay his School fees, he undertook to pay them himself. The tie between teacher and pupil was thus strengthened by appreciation and sympathy on the one hand and love and gratitude on the other. Seshia had not long to depend on Mr. Powell's charity, for by this time the funds left by Pachaiyappa Mudaliar for charitable and religious purposes were placed on their present footing, and out of the endowments set apart to help poor students Seshia was given a stipend of about Rs. 10. This was afterwards supplemented by another stipend from the Government amounting to Rs. 20. Seshia was now relieved from want, and could pursue his studies free from the cares which his poverty caused. As his studies progressed he began to gain distinction among his mates. He won prize after prize for handwriting, for translation and for original composition in English. His essay on "Civilisation" for which he obtained the Elphinstone prize attracted the special notice of Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, then Acting Governor of Madras; and the Marquis of Tweeddale, who succeeded Lord Elphinstone in the Governorship of Madras, gave him a special reward of Rs. 70 for his general merit and proficiency. The next distinction which Seshia gained was a Government reward of Rs. 300, given him as the result of a competitive examination held by a Board specially appointed for the purpose of organising and superintending certain public examinations of candidates for appointments to the public service and to offer pecuniary rewards to scholars. Shortly after, when the foundation stone of the Pachaiyappa's College was laid by Mr. George Norton, Seshia prepared and read a eulogy on Pachaiyappa, for which he got a purse full of gold mohurs, and which he had the rare satisfaction of seeing printed in the next issue of the Madras *Crescent*. Such successes and such rewards now rarely fall to even the most brilliant of our young men; and strangely enough there are fewer men in these days to gaze on and admire conspicuous intellectual accomplishments.

Seshia in his time shone as a solitary star while now there are too many stars for any one of them to attract too much attention. People then looked on merit and intellectual achievements from a comparatively low level; now they look on from a much higher one. The distance is less, and the glamour accordingly diminishes. No achievement in the intellectual field in these days easily draws attention to it; but in Seshia's time the ignorant as well as the educated multitude regarded a product of English education, especially a brilliant product like Seshia, as something unusual, something extraordinary. Even high English officials, who were themselves well educated and accomplished men, found something to admire and wonder at in a highly intelligent English educated Indian youth. So on the anniversary day of the High School in 1846, Sir Henry Montgomery, the Revenue Secretary to Government, was struck with the large number of prizes which Seshia obtained, took the young man aside, shook hands with him, and congratulated him on the honors he had received. This gentleman got him employed as a private tutor to the sons of the Head Sheristadar of Tanjore, on a salary of Rs. 25 per mensem. This income he enjoyed to the end of his school days, and with it he was able to render help to his uncle and his family. In 1848, he took the Proficient's Degree with First Class Honours, standing first in the order of merit. Thus equipped Seshia left the High School with all the learning, all the accomplishments, all the rewards and all the distinction that was possible for any young man to gain as a student.

His life's struggle was now to commence. His path so far was easy enough. He had tided over his poverty, had successfully faced the ordeal of study and examination, had gained the good will of his teachers, and had won the admiration of the multitude. All these however were of little use unless he obtained a decent footing in the public service. A man so well educated and so well accomplished would have open to him in many other countries the rewards of public life, of law, of medicine or of journalism. In England he would have been welcomed as a valuable addition to party ranks, and induced to enter Parliament. But in the country of his birth and at the time he began his career, no occupation or emolument proportionate to his abilities and attainments was available to him. He was not even selected as a teacher in any of the schools in which he had gained so much dis-

tinction. In these days a young man of intelligence and education may directly be appointed as a Deputy Collector, or he may join the Bar as a Vakil and soon become a Munsiff, or if he has no love for office he may distinguish himself as a lawyer, as a doctor, or even as Journalist and public man. In Seshia's days the most, if not the only, honourable occupation was that of a public servant, and no man could attain to a high official position unless he had begun as a clerk and passed through the inferior grades. Madhava Row, who had taken his Proficient's degree two years earlier, had to wait for an appointment, as may be seen from the letters that he wrote to Seshia while the latter was still in school. With all the enthusiasm of youth and with the accomplishments of his pen, Madhava Row asked his friend whether he intended venturing into the outstations for employment or looked to establishing himself in some independent position in life, "to become a man of profession, to turn an architect, an Engineer, a lawyer or a Judge." In writing thus Madhava Row was doubtless half-earnest, half-jocular; and as is evident from a further letter of his, there is no doubt that Seshia regarded his future as "involved in clouds and darkness." And when he came out of the school into the world he must have been greatly disappointed to find that the very official who had paid him so much attention while in the school turned a cold-shoulder to him when he sought his attention and expected his patronage. Sir Henry Montgomery who had warmly congratulated him on the anniversary day of the High School did not condescend to notice him even after he had waited at his gate for days together *salaming* to the Sahib when he drove out or returned from his drive. And when, on the suggestion of a friend, he ventured to send in a note to the great official, the Sahib expressed surprise at the audacity of the boy who dared to address him by letter! Seshia apologised with all humility for his presumption, and got in return not an appointment, but a "promise of help." The lordly promise, however, availed him nothing; for he succeeded in getting his first appointment through the kindly help of Mr. George Norton who, free from the hauteur of office, introduced Seshia to the Sub-Secretary to the Board of Revenue, and through the latter he was appointed to act as a clerk on an allowance of Rs. 12-8, being confirmed three months later on Rs. 25. It is sad to contemplate that with his academical distinctions, his talents, his industry, and his upright conduct, he was confined to the

drudgery of a clerkship without any immediate opportunity of exercising his powers and utilising his knowledge. Very little of what he had studied in the school was of use to him in his new sphere. He was one among two hundred clerks who spent their time in copying manuscripts. Lost in this crowd Seshia had to distinguish himself by the rapidity rather than by the power of his pen. He tried to copy as fast as he could, and managed to turn out thrice as much as the quantity as was turned out by other clerks. Even this was not sufficient in the eyes of his immediate superior, the Manager of the office, to entitle him to any special consideration. But Seshia had the good fortune of one day attracting the attention of the Secretary Mr. Thomas Pycroft who thought the young man better suited for drafting work and accordingly transferred him to the Correspondence Department where he worked under the immediate supervision of Mr. Pycroft and gave him every satisfaction. Here he had work more or less suited to his talents and capacity, and gained an experience which proved useful to him in his later career.

Among his contemporaries at this time were Madhava Row employed as a Clerk in the Accountant-General's Office, Sadasiva Pillay, Rama Iyengar and another working in the office of the Board. All these were destined to win laurels in after-life, and were waiting for their turn in the wheel of fortune. Madhava Row preceded, and Rama Iyengar succeeded him in the Dewanship of Travancore, while Sadasiva Pillay lived to become the distinguished Chief Judge of the Travancore Sadur Court. All had received the same training. All were inspired by common aims and common aspirations. All looked forward to a great future. And all were destined to realise their ambition. Among their countrymen they were distinguished by their education. From their fellow-clerks they were going to be separated for a life of eminence and distinction. They therefore clung together out of office hours for conversation, for amusement and for the discussion of current topics. They had hope, energy, and enthusiasm. Their office work did not give them sufficient scope for their talent and their knowledge. So they sought diversion from official duties by writing to the only newspaper then in existence, to voice the aspirations of the Indian community, the *Crescent*. They also read essays and held Debates in the Literary Society connected with the High School.

The time now came for the friends to separate. Madhava

Row went to Travancore as Tutor to Princes; and Seshia was appointed on the establishment of the Special Commissioner for the Northern Circars as a Clerk. He started with the camp which moved in June 1849. Mr. Walter Elliot was the Special Commissioner, and with him was his Sheristadar, a Telugu Brahmin. This man was in need of a teacher to his sons, and Seshia was ready at hand. His spare hours Seshia devoted to teaching the Sheristadar's sons, and thus established a claim on his immediate superior's sympathy and patronage. He obtained board and lodging with the Sheristadar's sons, and was thus relieved of all cares. In his movements to and fro with the camp, he had opportunities of coming in contact with the Commissioner, Mr. Elliot, who began to like him for his talents and for his devotion to duty. Seshia drafted official papers which pleased his master. Beginning with drafting official papers from notes and hints supplied by Mr. Elliot, he began making original drafts himself. Mr. Elliot observed his work, was satisfied, and began to entertain increasing confidence in the young man's capacity and commonsense. In two years he became the right-hand man of Mr. Elliot, well acquainted with revenue work, and capable of performing responsible duties. His salary was raised from Rs. 25 to 35, and again from Rs. 35 to 50. His star was now about to rise. Though only twenty-three years of age, he had given evidence of great intelligence and capacity, and great satisfaction to his superior. The District of Krishna had at that time a number of Tahsildars of the old school, ignorant of English, often inefficient, and generally corrupt. Such, at least, was the opinion formed of them by their official superiors. The Taluk of Masulipatam was then in a bad way. It had suffered from the weakness of its Tahsildar. Budmashes and rowdy characters were abundant, and had practically their way. The Collector felt the situation. He spoke to Mr. Elliot about it; and the latter recommended Seshia with confidence as a fit person to produce order out of chaos. The Collector, when he saw Seshia, thought him too young for so responsible a post. But the young man had more than ordinary confidence in himself. He said that he would grow older in time, and that with the support and guidance of the Collector he would have no difficulty in managing the taluk. The Collector was pleased with the bearing and address of the young man, and forthwith gave him the order of appointment.

The humble youth who had struggled his way up through poverty and depression now found himself the ruler of a taluk. The office was one of great dignity and importance in those days, and carried with it large powers and much larger influence.

How Seshia did his work in Masulipatam we will presently relate. In the meantime it is not without interest to reflect on his career so far. The young man who had any amount of attention paid to him while in the school, found himself treated with coldness when he got out of it with all the laurels which he could win there. We have seen that Sir Henry Montgomery who on a prize-giving day personally congratulated him and enhanced the heartiness of his congratulations by shaking hands with him, took no notice of him when he was a supplicant at his gate for an appointment, and when he was communicated with by a note, took offence at his insolence. A young man of real independence of spirit, and especially one who could boast of such accomplishments as Seshia possessed, would have hardly thought it consistent with self-respect to wait at the gate of an official, however high; and after he had been for days left unnoticed, would have scarcely thought it fit to invite attention by a letter. But Seshia did both. His assuidous waiting at the gate, while the great official was passing out and passing in, proving unsuccessful, he submitted a humble note. For this boldness he had to apologise with the humiliation of both soul and body. Even after all this experience, Seshia returned satisfied with the "promise of help" that the lordly Sahib condescended to give, and waited in hopes of actually getting it, though it never came. Thus the manly independence for which Mr. Kameswara Iyer gives him credit did not show itself at least in his early years, at the time when men are expected to think too much of themselves, to entertain exaggerated notions of their importance and merits, and to be least calculating about the remote consequence of their conduct. No doubt, in his after life, Seshia Sastri showed both courage and independence; but that was when he no longer needed the favour of others. It is no great credit to a man who has attained to the highest position open to him, has got all that he aspired for, and feels his position secure without the favour of others, that he should at times act with independence and speak out with boldness. Nor does it appear that Seshia showed any great courage of conviction except when he wrote his opinion on the Ilbert Bill, or that he showed

any great interest in public affairs unconnected with his official duties, except on this and on another occasion when he spoke with bitter contempt of "penniless patriots."

At the time Seshia passed out of the High School, he could have easily secured a situation in any Public office without subjecting himself to the humiliation of waiting for days together at the inhospitable gate of Henry Montgomery. Madhava Row, Rama Iyengar and others among his contemporaries had all obtained appointments without going through this process. Every head of office welcomed in those days the advent of English-educated young men like Seshia; and when he got a place afterwards, it was without difficulty and without any unwelcome experience such as he had in his first advance to Henry Montgomery. Nor was he at this time so straitened in circumstances that it was necessary for him for the sake of his livelihood to humble himself to the dust before an unsympathetic and haughty official. He had got enough of money prizes and rewards and had besides an income of Rs. 25 a month as a private tutor. Necessity therefore did not drive him to do *puja* to a deity that did not deign to look at him. Still Mr. Kameswara Iyer sees nothing strange in the conduct of Seshia. He sees nothing wrong in that of Montgomery himself. Seshia had to do what he did because he wanted an appointment. Montgomery treated him as he did because he was kind of heart, and beneath a rough and lordly exterior concealed a warm and genuine sympathy! Seshia, we are told, had offended against *mamool*. It was the custom for aspirants for an appointment to wait at the gates of officials and *salaam* till the gentleman should see fit to send for them and make enquiries. This was not because, Mr. Kameswara Iyer, tells us, "English gentlemen in those days were rough mannered and heartless. Far from it, their hearts were full of the milk of human kindness, but they had their lordly ways while concealing a noble and generous heart." But Montgomery had once at least given up his lordly ways when he bestowed his attention on Seshia on the prize-giving day. His admiration for the young man was then unbounded; and he showed it in the most becoming manner. Why did he then assert his lordly way when Seshia appeared at his gate, when it was in his power to do him some real act of kindness? It is quite possible that he did not recognize the young man with whom he had once shaken hands. But when he received his letter he, instead of repenting for his forgetful-

ness, rebuked the supplicant for his insolence. This did not show much kindness of feeling nor a noble and generous heart. If he eventually promised help, it was because Seshia apologised "in due form," and because such a youth in such a predicament could not but excite pity in any human breast. Pity is felt even towards lower animals; and it is no wonder that Seshia by his humble and apologetic bearing excited something of that feeling in the Revenue Secretary to the Madras Government. If Montgomery was all that Mr. Kameswara Iyer considers him to have been, he would have felt a generous enthusiasm for a youth so brilliant, so accomplished, and so distinguished as Seshia was. He would have not only been kind and generous to him, but would have instantly done something to furnish him with an appointment, which it was in his power to do. But for the distinction which Seshia attained in after life, this incident would not have been recorded. And since it is recorded and since Seshia's example is likely to be followed by other young men, we have thought it necessary to put it in the light in which we see it, and not as Mr. Kameswara Iyer chooses to see it.

Seshia was, as we have seen, duly installed as the Tahsildar of Masulipatam when he was barely 23. He was now the ruler of the Taluk, a far more important person than even the Collector of to-day. Men had then no idea of the limitations of his authority. They approached him with profound obeisance, and looked on him with awe and reverence. He did not give up anything of the pomp which was associated with his office. He held his court in the evening, attended by servants and peons and all the emblems of authority. A magnificent crowd of petitioners and spectators gathered at the court house. Everybody made obeisance with bated breath; and the dignitary passing between two rows of the worshipping multitude, took his seat, with becoming dignity, on a carpet seat, a soft cushion gently bearing his weight as he gracefully reclined. In front of him were seated his clerks on mats with low desks before them, deeply engaged in quill-driving. The hall was lighted with torches, the torch-bearers being an inevitable adjunct of the Tahsildar's Durbar. The business began with "torch-light salaam," which having once been the prerogative of kings, had now descended to the head of the taluk. The servants bent low to the earth, and touching the ground with their right fingers raised them to their forehead acclaiming in one voice "Jai Maharaj—victory to the

king of kings." Regular work then commenced. A lot of miscellaneous work had to be done. And parties and witnesses had to be examined. One man could not do all these at one time. A number of things had to be done by the clerks; and these latter shining in the reflected glory of their chief made the most of the situation. Seshia, almost fresh from the High School and the Special Commissioner's Office, had probably no idea of the powers and opportunities of his clerks. But he soon found that "the flattering and obsequious *Gumastahs* made secret understandings with the parties that came for justice (or for defeating its ends) and managed things in their own way," while leaving the Tahsildar under the delusion that *he* did everything. Seshia, as might be expected, had high notions of justice, and was determined that it must triumph over the machinations of clerks. The practice of holding office in lamp light peculiarly lent itself to the evil practices of subordinates. Seshia, therefore, resolved to hold his court during the day time. The people hailed the change with delight. He also began taking down depositions in his own hand in the English language and then comparing it with what the clerks had taken down in the vernacular. This made it impossible for them to alter and improve upon depositions as they liked, so as to fit in evidence with their pre-arranged conclusions.

These changes in the office were calculated to have beneficial results in numerous directions. The public were ensured better justice, and parties were freed from the necessity of bribing subordinates. Weak Tahsildars even in these days leave large power for mischief into the hands of their clerks. In Seshia's time, to leave such power was to pave the way for more injustice and oppression. His difficulty, however, was not with his office alone. We have seen that at the time he was appointed Tahsildar the taluk was in a bad way. Law and authority had been set at naught; and crime was rampant. Burglary was only too common. It was to remedy this state of things that Seshia was appointed Tahsildar; and if he therefore failed to effect this purpose his appointment would not have been justified. Seshia set himself to the task with earnestness and determination. He found that some men in the town were in league with the burglars. By persistent effort he succeeded in getting a clue. The first offender he got at was "a Brahmin copyist in his own office, an astute old fox with a

veneer of respectability" who had been receiving stolen property and disposing of it systematically. Seshia one morning suddenly pounced upon this man, and recovered hundreds of stolen things from his residence. Through him he traced the whole gang, committed them to the sessions, and had them punished. Having thus cleared the town of burglars, Seshia directed his attention to the disturbers of peace and to the bad characters generally.

As the head of the Police and as the Chief Magistrate of the Taluk, he was responsible for peace and order, for the security of person and property. Young as he was, the Tahsildar fully realised his responsibility. He brought into play uncommon tact, determination and courage. The qualities which he displayed were undoubtedly worthy of a man of much maturer age and wisdom. He had authority and might, but he did not neglect the arts of amity. He was not intoxicated by the sweets of power beyond the limits of prudence. We admire the young man facing a difficult and dangerous situation with calmness, courage and circumspection. There was enough of inflammable material among the population of the taluk: a single act of thoughtlessness or indiscretion would have set the town in a blaze. The Mahomedans of the town had been divided into two hostile and excited factions over a Moharam procession. They were ready to attack each other with sticks and swords and missiles of sorts. They had tried their chances in the Civil Courts. They were now prepared to use the logic of force. The Moharam was nearing; and the hostile camps were preparing for a free fight. Seshia managed the affair admirably. He used his influence with the Moulves and priests, and insisted on obedience to the authority of Government. Having won over the leaders of the rightful section, he had their procession formed, and with a display of Military force, he gave order in emphatic tones for the procession to proceed. The mutinious faction was cowed, and submitted. The Tahsildar had vindicated the might of law and authority; and there was an end of further troubles.

Further efforts were necessary to get at the criminal classes, and to trace crimes to their source. For this purpose Seshia organised a Census of the town of Masulipatam so as to ascertain the numerical strength, occupation, means and sources of livelihood of the local population. This was a most effective

and useful means of getting at the perpetrators of crime, one which could be used to easily distinguish the disreputable from the respectable. The idea of a Census was new; for it was not till sixteen years later that the Government of India themselves established a census of the different Provinces. Such a local Census as Seshia adopted is of much greater value since it is sure to be more accurate, and for purposes of criminal investigation it should be of immense use in this day. The Police, we think, are neglecting a useful means for the prevention and detection of crime. In large towns it is comparatively easy by this method to keep a watchful eye on suspicious characters. Seshia had great difficulty in taking the Census. He had to overcome the prejudices and suspicions of an ignorant people who could not discover the motives with which the new operation was started. But he managed everything successfully.

Seshia was now the dictator of the taluk. He had established a reputation for strict honesty, impartiality, uprightness, vigour and determination. He was held in esteem by the general public, was feared by the wicked and the unruly; and all felt confidence in his justice. He had put down corruption in his office, restored public security, and duly protected the interests of Government. Among all classes of people he was popular. By his Collector he was held in esteem for his character and abilities. Although an autocrat in his own Taluk, regarded almost as a God by the ignorant, and conscious of his authority and power, Seshia was far from disregarding the opinions and sentiments of the people around. His education had inspired him with a high sense of justice and duty; and his correspondence with his European benefactors and his Hindu associates kept him above the demoralisation which comes over men who exercise unquestioned authority over their fellow beings. Powell and George Norton, Madhava Row and Rama Iyengar were occasionally writing to him in terms of hope, sympathy and encouragement. He cared for their good opinion; he valued their friendship. The interchange of communications with them maintained in him the high ideals which he had been taught in the school.

The good work that he had done at Masulipatam had attracted the attention of the Commissioner, Mr. Walter Elliot, and of Mr. Pycroft, the Secretary to the Board. Pycroft wanted him in the office of the Board. Elliot wanted him in the Northern Cir-

cars. After much correspondence it was settled that Seshia should remain in the latter; and he was soon appointed as Naib Sheristadar of the District, an office which carried with it a salary of Rs. 175 a month, with the right of succession to the Head Sheristadarship. While Tahsildar, he had started a Debating Society. He now paid greater attention to it, and induced the English officials of the place to take an interest in it. Here he came in contact with Mr. G. A. Ballard, then Assistant Collector, and Mr. Holloway, the Head Assistant. Both appreciated Seshia's intellectual qualities and his literary accomplishments, and he moved with them on terms of equality and friendship. A year later, in 1855, the Head Sheristadar fell ill, and died in a few months. Seshia who had been doing his duty in the meanwhile was eventually appointed to the post. He had now risen in seven years, from the humble position of a clerk to the dignity of the Head Sheristadar. His comparative youth was doubtless urged as an objection to his appointment, but he had earned the promotion by his talents and capacity, by his industry and devotion. People in these days can hardly conceive the importance of the Head Sheristadar as he then was. He was the Chief Minister of the Collector and the virtual ruler of the District. It was possible for him to make and unmake men. The whole Revenue Department trembled before him. Tahsildars and Magistrates courted his favour and feared his displeasure. What he did for the improvement of a Taluk he now began to do for the improvement of the District. Corrupt men trembled in their shoes, while honesty and efficiency easily got recognition. The method of business was changed. The official atmosphere became purer. On the one side he had the good will of the people, and on the other the confidence of his superiors. At this time occurred the Sepoy Mutiny; and although Southern India had not been disturbed, there were idle rumours circulated among the warlike Musalmans. Placards were found stuck up in conspicuous places containing the words "kill the Christian dogs." Seshia felt uneasy in mind, and took all precautionary military measures. The days passed quietly; and when the Queen assumed the direct sovereignty of India, it fell to Seshia to draw up the address to the Sovereign. The address is printed in the volume before us. It is the first literary production of Seshia's which we read in this book. It is written in irreproachable English. Its sentiments are happy and well conceived. It covers

the entire ground of the great Proclamation which was read throughout India in 1858. It expresses sincere appreciation of the benefits conferred by the East India Company's rule, and warm affection and attachment to the Sovereign lady. It repeats and emphasizes the promises contained in the Proclamation, especially those affirming the people's right to their lands, and to the undisturbed observance of their religion, their laws and their customs. The address concludes with the prayer that "wisdom may guide the Counsels of Your Majesty's Ministers, and that heroism may strengthen Your Majesty's warriors, that the rod of the Magistrate may never be lifted, nor the sword of the soldier ever unsheathed but at the bid of justice, and that Your Majesty's gentle mercy may always temper the severity of stern justice, so that all Your Majesty's poor and humble subjects may ever have reason to love, honor, obey and bless their Gracious Sovereign." The address well deserved the special attention it received, and the special and prompt manner in which the Secretary of State transmitted it to Her Majesty. Mr. George Norton who was then in England knew the authorship, and wrote to Seshia expressing "much admiration." The address was considered one of the best, if not the best, sent from India; and so doubtless it was.

Seshia had now risen to eminence both in his own estimation and in the estimation of others. His name was known beyond his District; his merits were appreciated by a wider circle. The ordinary Head Sheristadar in those days was a great man in his own place; but he had no name outside. But Seshia had many eyes turned to him from different parts of the Presidency. All looked on him as a rising genius. Many men in these days doubtless write as well as Seshia did; many are equally capable and clever. But the latter have not the advantage which Seshia had of shining as a solitary star in the firmament and thus drawing all attention to themselves. With all his ability and all his advantage, however, he had been treated with scant consideration by Henry Montgomery. He was now treated with scant courtesy by Mr. Newill, the first Commissioner of Revenue Settlement. Asked by the Collector to furnish Mr. Newill with information and help, Seshia proceeded to the Commissioner's tent, sent in his card, and waited to be called. Receiving no response for half an hour, he returned to his office. Mr. Newill apologised afterwards for his apparent rudeness, explaining that he had

been absorbed in business; but Seshia anticipated no good from such a beginning, and he was right. When they joined for business, they differed in opinion. Mr. Newill, with the confidence of inexperience, did not want to be taught by a native subordinate; but his unassailable principles of Mathematics did not tally with the actual condition and productive capacity of the soil. Other officers came to look into the matter, and they found Seshia's views sound. Mr. G. N. Taylor, Mr. Goldingham, and Mr. Ballard all approved of Seshia's methods.

At this time were appointed the first batch of Deputy Collectors; and Seshia was one of them. He was posted to Nellore, and was to get a salary of Rs. 350. His charge was the Treasury which afforded no scope for his brilliant talents. But the Inam Commission had then been formed, with Mr. G. N. Taylor as the presiding officer. This gentleman had to organise his staff, and among the officers selected were Seshia and Rama Iyengar. Here again he had his disappointments. Rama Iyengar was promoted and put on Settlement work in Tanjore. Ranga Charlu and another gentleman, both Seshia's School fellows and juniors, were put in the Inam Department over him. Seshia complained against his supersession to the Government, and his petition received the special attention of Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Governor, who instantly promoted him to a higher grade on a salary of Rs. 500. In the Gazette Notification, Seshia was, for the first time, styled as Seshia Sastri. Till then he had been plain Seshia; but by a mistake of the Governor he now became a Sastri, and retained the title. He had thus triumphed throughout, and now worked with great zeal and devotion. Mr. Taylor at this time found his Special Assistant unequal to his work, and having transferred him to the Judicial line, appointed Seshia in his place, as the best fitted man, on a salary of Rs. 600. Thus in two years' time, he had risen rapidly from post to post with substantial increase of salary at every step.

We pass over the interesting history of the Inam tenure given by Mr. Kameswara Iyer. We pass over the great work done in connection with it, the difficulties got over, and the success achieved. We also pass over the part that Seshiah played in it. But we may pause to observe that he received the heartiest commendation of his European superior who admitted, and recorded the admission, that the "great work could never have been accomplished at all by a single European officer but for the deep

insight into native character, the intimate knowledge of landed tenures, the eminent ability, and the indefatigable industry which my native assistants, men of known character and undoubted integrity, brought to bear upon it." The officer who made this admission was Mr. G. N. Taylor, a gentleman of liberal principles and broad sympathies. It was, indeed, generous of him to acknowledge his obligations to his Indian Assistants. Such acknowledgments are not always heartily or unreservedly made. In these days, perhaps, they are rarer still. The importance of the work which Mr. Taylor accomplished with the help of his assistants may be inferred from the fact that at the conclusion of the Commission the annual revenue had been increased by 8 lakhs of rupees while the total cost of the Commission did not exceed 13 lakhs. As a measure of policy also it was one of great importance, and the fears of those interested had been excited. It was fortunate for Mr. Taylor that he got assistants like Seshia who were sixteen in number and were all Powell's pupils. It is remarkable that the whole lot were distinguished for their uprightness and integrity. The public service in those days was not distinguished for its purity. Corruption was rampant everywhere. Although in justice to the older generation it must be said that there were many scrupulously honest men among the officials who did not know a word of English, the general standard of official morality was not high. The public opinion of those days did not altogether set its face against indulgence in irregular gains. We believe officials in those days did not exact bribe as some have done more recently. What they received was more often a present given by the winning party in gratitude for the justice or the favour that had been done to him. People perhaps hardly made a difference in those days between a act of justice and an act of favour. Everything that was to one's good was accepted as a favour, even if he could demand it as a matter of justice. When a petition was granted, or when a case was won, the person benefited thought it a duty to show his gratitude in some substantial form. This sort of thing seems to have prevailed long before the modern method of extortion came into use. As compared with the extortion of the Police and the inferior Magistrates in these days, the old practice was a virtue. But even from the taint of that virtue Seshia and his contemporaries were completely free. Their career is a refutation of the comforting libel which the apologists of the Police utter against

the people. If the official morality of those days was low, if the public did not sufficiently denounce the practice of officials taking bribe or presents from parties, these sixteen men who worked under Mr. Taylor and many others besides might have been very different from the honest, upright and devoted officials they were, and, according to the modern apologists of the Police, with every excuse for being so. But not one of them went wrong even though all of them were not equally prosperous in their career. The excellent education they had received under Mr. Powell and the high principles early inculcated in them, assisted by the example of men whom they admired and respected, must have kept them out of temptation's way. But their own strength of character certainly influenced their conduct more than all these.

Wherever Seshia went he set himself to "cleansing the Anglan stable." He did his best to stamp out official corruption. As Tahsildar, as Sheristadar and as Deputy Collector, he kept a keen eye on his erring subordinates, and raised the standard of official morality. After his work on the Inam Commission, he became the Treasury Deputy Collector of Tanjore. In this capacity he remained for three years. His salary was then Rs. 600, and had besides a consolidated allowance of Rs. 150 as Registrar of Assurances. Seven years before he had been a Tahsildar on Rs. 100. His rise, therefore, was rapid.

While he was thus employed his old mother died in his village. While she was ill, he ran to the village in the evening and returned to office in the morning. He paid every attention to her in her last moments. He placed a heap of money by her death-bed to be given away in any manner she liked. She who had been born poor, and had lived in poverty during the first years of her life, had the satisfaction of seeing her son grow up, win success and distinction in life, and bring prosperity to the family, before she closed her eyes, before she gave up her last breath. And he did the last act of filial duty in the most devoted and affectionate manner that the Hindu religion and Hindu traditions enjoin.

In 1868, in recognition of his academical accomplishments and of his distinction in life, Seshia was appointed a Fellow of the Madras University. A year later, Jayaram Chetty, the Head Sheristadar of the Board of Revenue, died, and the post was offered to Seshia as, in the opinion of the Board, he was the best qualified for it. He was not, however, quite willing to accept

it. The salary of the office was then Rs. 800, only Rs. 50 more than what he was getting at Tanjore. By coming to Madras he would be a loser in purse as life in Madras was much more expensive and the work much heavier. At the same time the office was the highest then open to a native of India. It carried with it prestige and influence. For the latter reasons his friends urged him to accept the place. Holloway who had by this time become a Judge of the High Court and Sir Alexander Arbuthnot were among those who left no option to Seshia in the matter. So after once refusing it, he accepted it with reluctance. The Board recommended that the salary of the office must be raised to Rs. 1,000, and the Government granted it on the ground, as they wrote, "that the post of Sheristadar to the Board of Revenue might continue to be an object of ambition to the ablest native officials and to command the highest qualifications." But they made it a condition that the increase should be given only after five years' approved service. Later on in 1870, however, Seshia's salary was raised to Rs. 1,000 without any condition. In the new office he had most arduous work to do, and he did it exceedingly well. He made his presence in the Board felt by Collectors whose Annual Reports he reviewed in the most thorough and searching manner. Sir William Robinson was then one of the Members of the Board; and Mr. J. Grose the Secretary. These officers had a high opinion of Seshia's capacity and character, and the former even proposed that the Sheristadar should attend the meetings of the Board and take part in the deliberations. The constitution of the Board did not admit of this; but the members went down to Seshia's office to consult him frequently. Such was the distinction he had attained. Such was the honour in which he was held.

In the meantime some of his old associates and school-mates had come back to Madras. Holloway whom we have mentioned daily met Seshia in the evenings on the beach, and kept up a stimulating conversation. He had, besides, the company of Muthuswami Iyer who had come back as a Presidency Magistrate, of Rama Iyengar who had become Superintendent of Stamps, of Chentsal Row who was Salt Deputy Collector, and of Raghunatha Row, then Deputy Collector of the City of Madras. The brilliant company met in the evenings at Muthuswamy Iyer's. They had all been

separated for years. They were now brought together again as men of culture, of distinction and of influence. They could look back on their past with satisfaction. They could look forward to the future with hope and cheerfulness. Seshia had no hope of rising higher in the service; for he had now reached the highest open to an Indian. But destiny was still working in his favour. The absorption of Native States had reached its highest limit in Dalhousie's time. The Mutiny followed, and the Queen had guaranteed the integrity and protection of Native States. Travancore had been saved from an acute financial crisis by the genius of Madhava Row. But owing to differences with the then reigning Maharajah, Madhava Row had to retire from the Dewanship. The post was now offered to Seshia through the Governor of Madras. In 1872, he was one morning suddenly summoned to the Government House at Guindy where the provisional Governor Sir Alexander Arbuthnot informed him of the offer. Seshia seems to have hesitated, but a salary of Rs. 2,000 a month with the dignity and power of the office was not to be easily disregarded. The offer was duly accepted, and Seshia proceeded to Travancore, and was installed as Dewan on the 20th May, on probation for one year.

The situation was new to him. He had, indeed, thorough experience of administrative work, but had no experience of Maharajahs. The sovereign of Travancore at that time was an astute and accomplished statesman. His abilities and attainments were of a high order. He was versed in several languages; and spoke and wrote English with exceeding ease and effect. He was well informed on current topics, and was well acquainted with every detail of the administration. Then, as now, in Travancore the Maharajah was the real head of the administration. He held the main strings in his own hands. It was his right to command. It was the duty of others to obey. Princes in Travancore, even when they are little boys, are brought up in the atmosphere of adulation. In their own palace, all around them are servile. When they drive out, they are attended by body guards; and all the men in the State from the Dewan downwards get out of their carriages when they see a prince on the road, and make the most profound obeisance. Brought up in this way, without association with men who are their equals or who are independent of them, these Princes seldom have any rough experience of the world. They are what they

are by birth, and have no reason to bend to anybody except to the elder members of the royal family. There are any number of men to flatter them, but few to correct them. Even such was the training of the Maharajah whom Seshia Sastri was to serve. With all his accomplishments and knowledge His Highness was an autocrat who would brook no opposition, no contradiction, from anybody, not even from his minister. To serve such a king successfully required great tact and patience. Seshia did his best to please his master and at the same time to do things as he conceived best both for the interests of the state and for the reputation of the Maharajah. It was frequently necessary for him to point out mistakes in His Highness's procedure and to dissuade him from certain acts. During the first period of his office Seshia succeeded in his efforts. Before the end of the first year, he was confirmed in his office for a period of five years under certain conditions to be observed on either side. The confirmation was accepted by the Madras Government who were pleased to see that Seshia had given satisfaction in his new office and gained the confidence and approbation of the Maharajah.

Seshia had a good deal to learn of the country and its people, their language and institutions. He applied himself to the task with great zeal, and mastered everything that he was expected to know. The finances of the country had been improved by Sir Madhava Rao. The total revenue in 1871-72, the last year of Madhava Rao's administration, stood at 54 lakhs, 6 lakhs more than that of a decade before. But the extra sources of revenue which had contributed to the excess were not likely to recur; and extra expenditure had to be incurred for religious ceremony, for the Maharajah's trip to Northern India, and for other purposes. In spite of this, Seshia managed to secure equilibrium between revenue and expenditure by retrenchment and by careful check and supervision; and the Madras Government in reviewing successive Administration Reports of Seshia acknowledged the satisfactory manner in which the finances had been administered.

At the time Seshia entered on his duties the State had attained, under Madhava Row, a high state of financial prosperity. Its administration had been brought up to the modern standard. Madhava Row's work had received wide appreciation in India and England. In his time Travancore for the first time began to be known as "the Model State." It was impossible, at least in the

eyes of the outside public, to improve upon what Madhava Row had done and achieved. He had introduced order and system, had corrected great evils, and had accomplished great reforms. All the higher kind of work had been done by him. What remained was mainly to keep expenditure within limits, to see that things were kept going, that order and efficiency were maintained, that incidental evils were corrected and checked. These things Seshia could do as well as any other man ; but there was little scope for the higher efforts of statesmanship, or of great ambition. His first attention was directed to the low scale of salaries that then prevailed in several departments of the State Service. In order to improve efficiency and ensure honesty he thought it necessary to revise the existing scale and to give higher emoluments to several of the officials. But the Maharajah was very strong where money had to be expended, and would feign put off every increment suggested. Seshia tried, waited, and tried again ; and after much delay and correspondence, the greater portion of his scheme received the royal sanction. He next defined the relation between the Dewan and the heads of departments who were hitherto free to do things as they liked. Henceforward it became incumbent on all heads of departments to submit to the authority and control of the Dewan, to inform him of departmental operations, and to submit periodical returns. This removed all causes of friction and unpleasantness.

His work was now heavy. He had all manner of petty details to attend to, and had no proper assistance. He had besides Magisterial functions and appellate jurisdiction in criminal cases. He badly wanted more time to devote to important administrative work. A Regulation was, therefore, passed relieving him of his direct Magisterial functions ; and a capable Secretary was appointed in his office to look after all routine work. He also now introduced a class of probationers in his office, called "attaches," on a monthly salary of Rs. 20. This afforded an opening to the graduates that passed out of the local College. They were trained in the office to be afterwards drafted into the executive departments as vacancies arose.

Now he turned his attention to the abuses which prevailed in the different Departments. The Salt Department was the first to be dealt with. The abuses and corruption that were then prevalent were checked by proper measures. The waste in the charitable institutions was minimised by proper supervision and

control. The Public Works was another department where great waste was going on. Seshia adopted the necessary measures to keep expenditure within limits, without neglecting useful works. He opened new roads, repaired irrigation works, excavated new tanks, saw the Warkalley tunnell, which had been begun in 1869, completed. The great Padmathirtham tank in Trivandrum was cleansed of its silt and its dirt. The channel which supplied water to the tank and which had been long left in neglect was also repaired and cleansed. The temple and its tower were beautified at considerable cost. A splendid building was erected for the College; and a law class for the B.L. course was opened. Numerous Primary Schools were established as State institutions, popular subjects being taught in them. The system of grants-in-aid was also introduced for the first time. The museum and public gardens were next taken up, improved, and placed under proper management.

While such good work was proceeding, a question cropped up as regards jurisdiction over European British Subjects. The matter had been once settled in Madhava Row's time by the Madras Government which then affirmed that such jurisdiction did vest in the courts of the Maharajah. In 1874 again the subject was raked up by the Viceroy who refused to recognise the decision of the Madras Government. Seshia fought manfully for the rights of his State. He argued with great force and spirit that the right was inherent in the Sovereign of Travancore; that it had not been ceded by treaty; that it was recognised by international usage; that by the rules of international law the smallar state was secured in its inherent privileges; that the Proclamation of 1858 had reiterated and reaffirmed all the rights and dignities belonging to Native Princes; that Travancore, which had never been subject to foreign rule and which was one of the oldest Royal Houses in India, had under all circumstances stood faithful to its old alliance with the British; that it had adapted its laws and its courts of justice to the British model; that it had even employed Christian Judges; and that the British Government, merely because it was great and powerful and was bound by certain treaties to protect it against any aggressor on payment of a subsidy, could not deprive it of its inherent privileges. He further pointed out that the dignity of his Sovereign would suffer by the innovation and that with an increasing number of European British Subjects in the

State, legal procedure would be very much hampered and delayed by parties and witnesses having to travel to distant British Courts. The plea, however, did not avail with the Government of India; but as a special concession Travancore was allowed to appoint its own Magistrates, who should be European British Subjects, to try all cases against men of their race, the British Resident being invested with the powers of a Court of Session, and the High Court of Madras being a higher tribunal.

In the meantime Seshia had been invited by the Madras Government to proceed to England to give evidence before the Parliamentary Committee on Indian Finance. Sir William Robinson, then a Member of Council, was anxious that Seshia should go. But for an orthodox Hindu, a Brahmin, a voyage to England was out of the question. The thought could not be entertained for a moment. The invitation was, therefore, respectfully declined.

Time proceeded fast. The year was now 1877. Seshia's term was expiring. And the Maharajah had no wish to retain him longer. Allusion has been made to the temper and disposition of the Maharajah. His Highness did not want a Minister who did not yield to him readily. Madhava Row had created in his mind a prejudice against "Powell's boys." Seshia Sastri confirmed that prejudice. Though, on the whole, the latter had pulled on well with His Highness for five years, there were occasions when the Minister had to thwart the royal wishes. In the matter of appointments this was particularly so. Whatever Seshia did was in the best interests of the Sovereign. But this was not always recognised. Many a time His Highness gave plain indications of his feeling when remonstrated with, and on one occasion wrote to him that "this is a spirit of Madhava Row and when I see such a spirit my feelings would be disturbed in the same manner." He was now determined that he would not have a minister who presumed to dictate to him. Seshia soon learned the wishes of the Maharajah, and tendered his resignation in due form. His Highness appreciated his services, though he did not like his spirit, and wrote a very kind letter accepting the resignation. Seshia left the State in August 1877 amidst the regrets of all including all the members of the Royal family.

There is little doubt that Seshia was immensely liked by the people of Travancore. His ability and attainments were

bound to have admirers among the educated; and his uprightness and vigour and his vigilance over his subordinates could not fail to impress the common people. Even to this day, his name is held in esteem in Travancore; he is always spoken of with respect. If the people had their choice, they would have kept him in office; but the Maharajah's will was supreme, and there was no man within the State who could venture to suggest a reconsideration of his resolve. He does not appear to have imported from outside an army of office-seekers; and he did something for the encouragement of locally educated men. It cannot be said that he left the State with satisfaction or without a sigh. The office of Dewan is one of dignity and power. The emoluments attached to the office are attractive enough. The free residential quarters and perquisites meet the main items of a Dewan's expenditure. The country besides possesses many attractive features; and with official quarters all over and any number of officials ready to minister to his comforts, it is most convenient to combine duty with pleasure. Seshia, moreover, was retiring on a pension of Rs. 500 a month without any hope of further official distinction. In fact he felt that the evening of his life had come, although he was only 49 years old. He retired to Trichinopoly where he stayed for some time. At this time occurred the great famine of South India, and Seshia Sastri was entrusted with the duty of distributing the English famine charity in the district. The Duke of Buckingham entertained great regard for Seshia, and through his efforts apparently, he was created a C.S.I. in 1878. The Duke also appointed him as an Additional Member of the Legislative Council. But here he did nothing, and perhaps could do nothing, since, as he himself writes, "there is not real independence or power given to the Non-official Members." He was later on deputed as the Madras Member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council; and what services he rendered in this capacity is not recorded. He was doubtless useful to the Government in consultation about Administrative and Legislative matters.

In his retirement Seshia Sastri engaged his time in study, in correspondence, and in formulating his views for the benefit of the Government on important public questions of the day. Mr. Kameswara Iyer gives copious extracts from his letters and minutes; and from these a correct idea may be formed of his political opinions. By his younger countrymen he was, indeed,

regarded as unsympathetic. He never took part with them in any public movement. He never made even any pecuniary contributions. Both in retirement as well as when he was the head of the Pudukottah administration, this was the attitude he maintained. When the National Congress was held in Madras for the first time in 1887, when Sir Madhava Row and others were directly taking part in it, when native administrations such as those of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin were subscribing large sums, Seshia Sastri who was then the Dewan-Regent of Pudukottah took no interest, paid not a pie. His unsympathetic attitude was freely commented upon in the Press. Mr. Kameswara Iyer does not mention and offers no explanation for this attitude, although he repeatedly affirms that Seshia was in sympathy with the aspirations of his countrymen. A perusal of the papers printed in the book leaves no doubt in our mind that Seshia Sastri's political opinions are the political opinions of educated India. On the question of Local Self-Government, on the subject of the jurisdiction over European British Subjects, on agriculture and industry, on irrigation, on the employment of Indians in the public service, on Land Revenue Settlement and taxation, and on several other matters besides, his views are essentially the views of Congressmen all over the country. Why did he then allow his sympathies to be merely passive, and his attitude to be misunderstood? A man in his position could have done much to gain the attachment and applause of his younger countrymen. But he seldom showed any practical interest in the labours of public men and politicians. His words, on the other hand, sometimes smacked of intolerance and irritation.

In his minute on Lord Ripon's Local Self-Government scheme he betrayed something of the latter feeling. In his general observations we fully agree. They are such as might have been made by the most zealous Congressman. There is in them a happy combination of moderation, prudence, patriotism and practical common sense. We cannot possibly take exception to the main principles he therein enunciates. Nevertheless it must be noted that he begins the document with evident ill-feeling towards certain classes of public men. "Even at this early stage," he writes, "stump oratory has sprung up and it goes without saying that a class of penniless patriots or demagogues who have nothing at stake is a dangerous element in any country, and must be so in a country acquired by conquest and held by

the sword." This language, it need hardly be said, was unworthy of a high-minded man such as Seshia Sastri was. It came with peculiar ill-grace from one who had himself emerged out of poverty and want. His critics were not slow to retort that he was himself not born with a silver spoon in his mouth; and in fact those at whom he aimed were much better circumstanced than he had been in his youth. Seshia Sastri, indeed, regretted his mistake. In a letter to a friend he said that he felt sorry for the language he had used and explained that he "must have been smarting under a sense of wrong done me by some of my junior public friends who had misunderstood and misrepresented me." We would prefer not to say more on this "slip" as Seshia Sastri himself calls it. But the mistake is one into which other men are apt to fall. In these days, English Education is a means for even very poor men to attain to affluence and greatness. A poor boy educated with the help of charity may in due course become an Administrator, a Judge, a Lawyer of eminence. And it is not unusual to see men of humble origin assuming aristocratic airs as soon as they have attained some position and acquired some money. People are apt to too soon forget their past, even their old friends and comrades. Even to their old benefactors they sometimes become patronising in demeanour. That such a good and great man as Seshia Sastri spoke contemptuously of "penniless patriots" shows how great is the temptation to elevate oneself at the expense of one's critics or opponents. There is little doubt that Seshia was smarting under a sense of wrong. His administration of Pudukottah had been freely criticised. A new school of critics had then sprung up in Madras. A new journal to voice the opinions and aspirations of the Indian community had come into existence. To attack the foibles of the older men, some of whom assiduously paid pujah to officials, sometimes at the sacrifice of great public interests, was the aim of the new party. The school to which Seshia belonged, the school of Madhava Row and Muthuswami Iyer, stood apart from the new school of politicians. The former looked to their official patrons and friends for everything. The latter put their faith in resisting the autocracy of the old world officialdom, backed up by the force of public opinion. They were strong in numbers, in intelligence, in hope and in energy. The one devoutly worshipped Mr. Carmichael. The other would rather worship Mr. Eardley Norton. The party of officials, of whom

Muthuswami Iyer was one, had joined in the demonstration in honour of Carmichael. The party of politicians had joined in protesting against it. There could hardly have been much hearty sympathy between two such schools of opinion. Of the older men Raghunatha Row and Rungiah Naidu had been with the new party. Madhava Rao and Muthusawmy Iyer gradually drifted to them though they did not completely identify themselves with them. But Seshia had been separated from them by distance, by occupation and by difference of sympathies. His position and surroundings only encouraged his aversion to the new school. And when he got an opportunity he burst forth with all the fury of injured innocence. This, we think, is the right explanation. He no doubt sympathised, as we have seen, with the principles and aims of the Congress. But for obvious reasons, he was not in sympathy with several of those who were carrying on its work. He thus allowed his aversion to men to appear as aversion to the movement itself. This attitude is certainly not justified by anything he said in favor of the aims of the Congress. It is of little use to say that a man sympathised with a movement when he did nothing for it himself, when he studiously withheld from it all the support he could easily give. Nor does it appear that he ever co-operated with his countrymen in any of those public movements which had for their aim the social and political advancement of the people. In social matters he remained a conservative. In political matters he was indifferent. His views on important public questions which have been recorded were given at the invitation of the Government, and not out of an active enthusiasm which fires public-spirited men when questions affecting the country crop up. Seshia's countrymen had a right to expect him to place his leisure, the prestige of his position, and the benefit of his large experience at their service. Men in his position could do nothing better, nothing higher in the broad public interests. But Seshia Sastri preferred then, as he does now, to live for himself in detachment from the outside world. He fought no battle for the public. He made no sacrifice for his countrymen. He may have excuses. But his is not the ideal which we would like to see other men follow.

His minute on the Ilbert Bill controversy is one of the best that ever proceeded from his pen. It is a bold expression of views on a very delicate subject on which the European and

Indian races were sharply divided. The style is vigorous, the diction is pure. In fulness of information, in closeness of reasoning and in the dignity of sentiment, it will take rank along with the best of State papers. His mind was, indeed, stirred to its inmost depths by the violent opposition set up to the measure, by the angry denunciations, and by the violent outbursts of racial feeling on the part of a considerable section of the ruling race. He appealed to the consistent policy of the British Parliament to the fundamental principles of the British constitution, and to the unity of the British Empire as all demanding equal laws, equal justice and equal rights for all. This minute, when published, was received with the warmest appreciation by his countrymen. Seshia had, indeed, shown that he had in addition to great ability and literary power, the courage of his conviction. Unlike some of his more cautious contemporaries, he had expressed himself with a freedom and nerve which commanded the admiration of all. He had gone into the very marrow of the question; and his admirable exposition left no flaw in his arguments and made no void in his facts. Delivered as a speech in the House of Commons, it would have made a tremendous impression, and would have taken rank along with the best efforts of Parliamentary eloquence. It was really worthy of the occasion, of the subject, and of the author. It is a pity that such power and such knowledge as he displayed therein were not further employed in the cause of his country and people.

After he had vacated the Dewanship of Travancore, he had no desire to be "anything else or anything less" as he himself put it. Nevertheless a new work was now to be forced upon him. The State of Pudukottah had fallen into the bad graces of the Madras Government. The Rajah, though an educated and accomplished man, had not proved a good or a successful ruler. It had even been seriously proposed that the State should be converted into a Zemindari; and a ministerial crisis had just then occurred. It was felt that a strong minister could save it from extinction. Seshia's name was suggested by Sir Madhava Row. The suggestion was very acceptable to the Rajah himself, to the Political Agent and to the Government. But Seshia was not willing to undertake the responsibility, and at first declined the offer. The Rajah begged of him to reconsider his resolve, and Madhava Row and Carmichael used their persuasive powers to induce Seshia to

take up the work. Eventually he yielded, and assumed the ministership in August 1878 on a consolidated monthly emolument of Rs. 1,000. Here, we consider, he did the most important work. He saved the Rajah from complete disrepute. He saved the State from ruin. The Rajah had been deprived of his salute and of his title of "Highness." Both were restored by the efforts of the new Minister. The State had fallen into a collapse. It new emerged from it under the able administration of Seshia. The Rajah died in 1886, and Seshia was duly installed as Dewan Regent. In all, he administered Pudukottah for the long period of sixteen years, until the young Rajah attained his majority. Space forbids us to take a lengthy survey of what he did during this period. We can only present to the reader our own estimate of his work and his achievements. His greatest work was the reform of the Land Revenue system which increased the area of cultivation and the revenue of the Government, and made land a valuable asset to the ryot. Under the old *Amani* system the ryot had no wealth in land; he had no secure tenure. He now got both, and under the new sense of security and freedom from thraldom, many new lands were taken up for cultivation adding to the revenue of the State. Seshia had great work to do, and he had a freehand. He granted remissions and reductions where justified, and this gave real relief to the landholder and the cultivator. He remodelled the village accounts and the judicial administration, repaired and extended irrigation works, revised the public establishments, improved the roads, established new medical institutions, introduced sanitary improvements, put down dacoities and robberies, and overhauled the administration of the jails. It is impossible to set forth, within our brief space, all that Seshia accomplished within the period of his administration. Suffice it to say that under him Pudukottah looked a quite new country with all the improvements and signs of a highly civilised State. The streets, the buildings and the public institutions assumed a new appearance. The education and training of the minor Rajah were arranged by him. The end of his stewardship now came. The young Rajah was installed on the throne in 1894; and Seshia handed over the State in the most splendid condition, with a flourishing revenue and a balance at the Treasury. Lord Wenlock in installing the Rajah acknowledged in fitting terms Seshiah's great and meritorious services to the

State and impressed upon His Highness a due sense of the deep gratitude he owed to the veteran statesman.

He now retired to his mansion on the Kaveri. Travaucore had given him a monthly pension of Rs. 500. Pudukottah granted him another pension of Rs. 400. He has lived long to enjoy his pension and his honours. His contemporaries and school-mates are all now dead. He is thus the sole survival of a generation which produced a set of brilliant administrators and statesmen. There is little to be said of his later life. It has no interest to the public. We now and then hear of him when a Governor pays him a visit in his own mansion. We heard of him when he was recently made a Knight of the most Exalted Order of the Star of India. We heard of him when the Insignia was presented to him by the Collector of Tanjore. The publication of Mr. Kameswara Iyer's book has revived interest in his life, a life which has so many achievements to its credit, which exemplifies great talents and capacity, great moral strength and great intellectual resource. He was thoroughly loyal and devoted to his Government, and to the Sovereigns and States he served. He thoroughly retains those feelings even to this day.

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